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ABSTRACT

This newsletter on educational innovation contains a reflection on educators' time limitations, a personal examination of the "teacher as coach" analogy, and several brief descriptions of programs in school renewal, innovation, and teacher education around the nation. Shari Castle and Gary D. Watts argue, in "Temporal Tensions: The Tyranny of Time," that traditional ways of arranging the educational calendar and teacher roles constrain time and so subvert innovation and creativity. They examine a 1991 survey of faculty for five broad strategies for change with specific examples of applications currently being practiced. The strategies were: (1) freeing up teachers from time constraints; (2) restructured or rescheduled time through altered calendar, school day, or teaching schedule; (3) establishing "common" planning time; (4) finding better, more efficient ways to use faculty meetings and staff development days; and (5) new ways to "purchase" time. In "A Players Guide to the Sport of Teaching," Kris Asthalter, a volleyball enthusiast, reflects on the teacher-coach analogy. This contributor finds that the analogy's greatest value is its emphasis on the affective domain--the opportunity for modeling and nurturing individual and team character that occurs in a coach-player relationship is a rich resource for teachers. A third section offers descriptions of two exemplary programs, two MIL Consortium comprehensive school renewal efforts, seven district-wide innovation efforts, and developments in the Teacher Ed Initiative. The final section contains selections from teacher discussion on an electronic network of topics treated in this newsletter. (JB)

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Vol. VII, No. 2 October 1992

DOUBTS & CERTAINTIES

A Forum on School Transformation from the NEA National Center for Innovation

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IN THIS ISSUE...

The educational status quo—with a calendar derived from the needs of an agrarian society and teacher job descriptions derived from a Stone Age mentality—continues to subvert innovation and creativity.

This is the central thesis that National Center staff members Shari Castle and Gary watts defend in their timely reflection on time. After examining the causes and consequences of "timelock," Castle and Watts analyze a 1991 survey of faculty at Center sites. The purpose: to uncover ideas and insights that just might offer escape from the prison of the clock and the calendar.

Kris Asthalter, Center consultant for the Austin Project, finds her escape at the net and the Network. Asthalter (see p.5) serves up some refreshing revelations gleaned from her experience on the volleyball court. She revisits—and takes some sharp shots at revising—the "teacher as coach" analogy.

Carl Luty
Interim Editor

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TEMPORAL TENSIONS:

The Tyranny of Time

by Shari Castle & Gary D. Watts

> As the teacher responsible for leading restructuring in our school I have been hit with the reality that not only is it difficult to change paradigms, but it *takes time.* Time for researching, time for discussing, time for assessing, and considering the overwhelming number of ideas for change, not only in structure and governance, but also in teaching and learning innovations, technology, and the philosophy of education. Teachers are being asked to "become empowered" and to take on a "more professional role" in education. I'm beginning to wonder how this is going to take place when in reality our time is already "overspent" in teaching. (School Renewal Network, 1991).

In schools and districts engaged in restructuring, the shortage of time is, according to teachers, one of the most difficult problems they face. The primary dilemma is that school faculties need time to restructure *while* restructuring time. We are "building the airplane while we're in the air." While designing and implementing changes, we must keep schools functioning well for students. Learning must continue.

The time problem is a barrier to much of the promise of school reform and must be solved in lasting and institutional ways. This issue is occasionally framed in terms of a failure to compensate teachers for time spent on a demanding and complex task. But the more fundamental problem is simply that school schedules and the demands of teaching do not afford the time necessary to work with one another, to participate in community forums, and to engage in professional development activities. Inflexible, outdated school calendars and obsolete teacher job descriptions are major obstacles for teachers everywhere in the network. Release time is one option in use at several sites. This is, at best, a partial solution. A more creative, less drearily orthodox approach would focus on redefining job descriptions for teachers to bring about more time for professional activites now too often dismissed as "non-instructional duties" that are not central to the teaching/learning process.

TIME DILEMMAS

Society vs. schools. Time pressure is an increasingly common aspect of American culture: "Timelock occurs when demands on our time become so overwhelming that it feels impossible to wring one more second out of crowded schedules and hectic days" (Keyes, 1992). According to Keyes, the price we pay for timelock is steep in terms of physical health, emotional

Those who begin with certainties shall end in doubts; but those content to begin with doubts shall end in certainties.
Adapted from Sir Francis Bacon, The Advancement of Learning

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stability, and the quality of our interpersonal relationships. Although timelock is a widespread socio-cultural phenomenon, schools have unique cultures that produce particularly imposing time dilemmas.

Instructional vs. non-instructional time. The traditional view of teacher's work is governed by the idea that time with students is of singular value, that teachers are primarily deliverers of content, that curricular planning and decision making rest at higher levels of authority, and that professional development is unrelated to improving instruction. As an example, the Washington, D.C., Acting Superintendent, when announcing four furlough days for teachers, emphasized that the furloughs included one instructional and three non-instructional days. The purpose of this emphasis was to deflect criticism from parents and other education consumers. The implicit message was that the loss of non-instructional time is insignificant. This attitude dramatically illustrates the lack of value placed on the time teachers spend on professional activities outside the classroom.

Given this benighted attitude, it's hardly surprising that teachers experience high levels of guilt when professional duties take them away from the classroom.

> We have taken substitute days so that committees can meet. We accomplish a lot at these meetings. The problem we run into, however, is the feelings of guilt for leaving our classes so often. I think most teachers have mixed feelings. They want input in things that matter concerning teaching, but they want to be with the students (School Renewal Network, 1992).

The role of teacher is slowly (though by no means surely) being redefined as a professional decision maker who is knowledgeable, reflective, and capable of independent judgment. In order to accelerate this process, we must change the conception of what constitutes the best, most appropriate organization of a teacher's time. An administrator wrote:

> Teachers spend approximately 80 percent of their time either administering instruction or evaluating it.
>
> Does that really make sense? In medicine the most important things a doctor does involve diagnosis, prescription, analysis, and adjustment of prescriptions. "Administering" the cure is not a particularly time-consuming activity in relative terms. One reason educators were driven to standardized treatments to non-standardized clients is because there is not time for reflection, consultation, or serious, as opposed to trivial, assessments (Time Survey Data, 1991).

Keyes: 'Timelock occurs when the demands on our time become so overwhelming that it feels impossible to wring one more second out of crowded schedules and hectic days.'

Internal vs. external control of teacher's time. The assumption persists that teachers—and therefore their time—have to be managed (since self-management is obviously beyond their capabilities). This assumption is a direct outgrowth of the historically low status of teachers and is intimately related to issues of trust and respect (Hargreaves, 1990). Teachers have not been trusted to use their non-instructional time wisely and have had virtually no control over the structure or use of their time.

The importance of teacher's authentic involvement in school change is now beginning to be recognized. Very often in the past, teacher involvement meant soliciting their ideas in order to ensure buy-in on top-down developments. The complexity of change, coupled with evidence that successful change must be locally driven, now makes teachers and other site personnel essential participants in any restructuring effort. The need for authentic involvement calls for shifting control over time structures to teachers themselves (Coalition of Essential Schools, 1991).

The clock vs. experience. Time may be thought of as technical-rational or phenomenological (Hargreaves, 1990). The technical-rational dimension holds time as a finite resource to be managed and organized, while phenomenological time is the often unmanagable, seldom neatly organized, subjective experience of lived time. This inner sense of time varies from person to person and is decidedly different from "clock" time.

Hargreaves (1990) sees major differences in the ways in which teachers and administrators conceptualize and experience time. Administrators tend toward technical-rational time, while teachers tend toward phenomenological time. The classroom is basically phenomenological in nature: many things happen at once and multiple variables affect the need for subtle, minute-by-minute shifts. Events are not sequential, and the experience of time has little to do with the ticking of a clock.

> Teacher needs and demands generated from the particularities of the context may obstruct, undermine, or redefine the purposes built into new administrative [implimentation] procedures and the time designations and allocations which accompany them. In this strained juxtaposition of . . . time frames can be seen much of the reason for the apparent failure of administratively imposed reforms in education (Hargreaves, 1990, p. 311).

This separation between external development and internal implementation of plans forces teachers to work according to external (rational-technical) timelines rather than according to the needs of students or the requirements for successful implementation.

Inflexible vs. flexible schedules. A teacher visiting our office recently said, "The schedule is GOD. You can do any innovation you want in your classroom as long as you don't mess with the schedule." Traditional, inflexible scheduling is based on administrative and institutional needs. New, more flexible scheduling patterns are based on pedagogical practices, the educational needs of students, and the professional needs of teachers.

Teacher development vs. student empowerment. Faculty development is necessary for student empowerment (see *Doubts & Certainties*, November/December, 1991), and faculty development takes time. Collaboration, dialogue, and reflection are essential.

> The most important resource for improvement is time with colleagues: time for [faculties] to examine, debate, and upgrade their norms of civility, instruction, and improvement. Considerably more time for these activities should be made in the normal school day, either by addition or by the elimination of activities that are less important (Bird and Little, 1986, p. 504).

TIME DILEMMA STRATEGIES

In response to this matrix of problems, we surveyed each of the National Center for Innovation sites in the spring of 1991 for the strategies they had developed to address time dilemmas. Five broad categories emerged. The five are described below, with examples of strategies currently in use at the surveyed sites.

The classroom is phenomenological in nature: Events are not sequential and the experience of time has little to do with the ticking of a clock.

Time Strategy #1: Freed-up Time. Most of the schools surveyed are attempting to free teachers from the traditional time constraints built into the teaching schedule. Generally, these tactics are temporary and ad hoc, but some efforts are being made to institutionalize the strategies. Schools report:

- ▶ Authorizing teaching assistants and college interns to cover classes at regular intervals.
- ▶ Enlisting administrators to cover teachers' classes
- ▶ Teaming teachers, both formally and informally, allowing one teacher to cover for another.
- ▶ Combining language arts/social studies with a community theater group. Teachers are free when students attend performances.
- ▶ Assisting students in developing a plan for an all-day "off-site" learning experience.

Strategy #2: Restructured or Rescheduled Time. Restructured time involves formally altering the calendar, school day, or teaching schedule. This strategy requires the active involvement of stakeholders because of practical problems such as parent schedules and bus schedules. However, the surveys also indicate the value of these strategies. Schools report:

- ▶ Rearranging the daily schedule. For example, adding student time on four days, so that students are released early on a fifth day. Such "banking" of time is the most common scheduling option.
- ▶ Creating a first period before students arrive. Students then stay longer in the afternoon, but faculty gain a common time for work and collegiality.
- ▶ Using some form of parallel block scheduling. For example, classes meet for five periods on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday with three periods before lunch and two after. On Wednesdays, only four class periods are held and students are dismissed after the fourth class.
- ▶ Structuring "schools within a school" groupings of students and teachers that provide more flexibility in scheduling time.
- ▶ Teaming teachers in a way that facilitates flexible scheduling.

Strategy #3: Common Time. Isolated "prep periods" are not sufficient for collaborative work. Therefore, many schools are experimenting with "common" planning time. Schools report scheduling common prep or planning periods for:

- ▶ Restructuring committees.
- ▶ Interdisciplinary teams.
- ▶ Discipline or subject areas.
- ▶ Grade-levels.

Strategy #4: Better-Used Time. While teachers express the

strong desire for more common time, faculty meetings and staff development days are generally viewed as wasteful. Many schools are now examining ways of using these days more effectively. Schools report:

- ► Consolidating central office meetings into one day.
- ► Reducing "administrivia" at faculty meetings.
- ► Having a management council that handles administrative affairs so that faculty meetings are used for planning and sharing ideas.
- ► Having single-issue faculty meetings moderated by an elected faculty member.
- ► Having a computer with E-Mail on each faculty member's desk.

Strategy #5: Purchased Time. Schools report a number of creative ways of purchasing time despite current funding constraints. Schools report:

- ► Establishing a "substitute bank."
- ► Receiving a foundation grant for early release time.
- ► Using staff development funds to buy time.
- ► Providing extra compensation for evening, summer, or weekend planning activities.
- ► Receiving "in-service" credits for collaborative development work.

Additional Considerations. In addition to the strategies described by our sites, the literature suggests several important considerations for dealing with the time issue:

- ► Attention must be given to both individual and institutional needs (Coalition of Essential Schools, 1991).
- ► Sensitivity to the local context is critical (Jacokes, 1990; Hargreaves, 1989).
- ► All stakeholders must be involved in the decision making (Jacokes, 1990).
- ► There must be a movement from "presentism" to overall long-term concerns (Hargreaves, 1989).
- ► Every effort must be made to convince policymakers of the imperative for professional, non-instructional time (Coalition for Essential Schools, 1991);
- ► Faculties and administrators alike must use vision, mission, and goals to prioritize and focus the use of time (Center for Organization and Restructuring Schools, 1992);
- ► All staff should strive to decelerate, accomplish more by doing less, and accept the discomforting reality that you can't do everything (Keyes, 1992).

Traditional institutional practice forces teachers to work according to external timelines rather than according to the needs of students. The schedule is God.

The surveys identified numerous successful efforts for dealing with the time dilemma. Many of these efforts, however, are only working at the edges of the problem. Even the most successful strategies our survey uncovered should be understood as mitigating, not solving, the problem. One teacher stated:

> The problem is not by any means solved. The majority of time needed for commitment to improvement comes out of teachers' lives. School systems are providing some time, but the time commitment of the individual teacher is the highest cost of school reform (Time Survey Data, 1991).

More time is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for coping with the time dilemma. (Hargreaves, 1990). Greater importance must be assigned to how the time is used, and who commands the authority to control its use:

> The solution . . . is to explore solutions which question the strength of the divisions between administration and teaching, between development and implementation, and which question the bureaucratic impulses that support such divisions. In particular, I suspect it would be more helpful to give more responsibility and flexibility to teachers in the management and allocation of their time and to offer them more control over what is to be developed within that time.
>
> In doing this, we would be recognizing that teacher development ultimately is incompatible with the confinement of teachers to the role of merely implementing curriculum guidelines (Hargreaves, 1990, p. 319).

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MOUNTAINS AND VOLLEYS:

A Player's Guide to the Sport of Teaching

by Kris Asthalter

I am a volleyball junky. No matter how tired I might feel at the end of the day, a good volleyball match revives me. This amazing recreative effect is not a benefit of the exercise alone, but the interaction with team members and the opportunity—the luxury—of concentrating on something so *separate from my work*.

Or so I thought.

"Teaching as coaching" was a phrase that came into my school restructuring vocabulary some time ago. For me it was the antonym of the frontal approach or lecturing. But it wasn't until someone suggested I relate the changing role of the teacher to volleyball that the phrase came alive. Suddenly analogies were bouncing all over the court!

One evening when I didn't have a volleyball match, I sat down and put the following list of "things a coach does" on the School Renewal Network:

- ▸ Calls time out at the right time; knows when the team needs to regroup.
- ▸ Focuses and builds on individual and team strengths, never on errors or weaknesses.
- ▸ Guides the team through plays, visualizes success, expects success.
- ▸ Models calm and confidence; assesses challenges objectively.
- ▸ Asks the team for ideas, comments, feelings.
- ▸ Admits own errors, but never dwells on them—or on anyone else's.
- ▸ Celebrates victories with genuine joy.

Let me admit from the start that this list is biased. First of all, I am a player, not a coach. The list is therefore a player's perception of what a coach does. As I shared the list with local coaches and players, *coaches* tended to point out, quickly and a bit testily, that I made no mention of teaching skills and advanced strategies. They wanted greater stress on demonstrating or modeling skills the proper way and on repetitions of skills (drills) for mastery.

Responses from *teachers*, on the other hand, centered on the development, through the "coach approach," of broader lifetime skills and qualities, such as self-esteem and self-discipline. In separate interviews with a former highly skilled player and her former coach I heard the exact same answer to the question, "What was the most valuable product of this player/coach relationship?" The answer: the player's increased self-esteem.

This coach, I hasten to add, bears no resemblance to certain apoplectic personalities you've seen erupting during televised sports events. As I talked with her, I felt vindicated in my decision to delete from my list any mention of of punitive tactics. "Scold-reinstruction" techniques ("How many times do I have to tell you to get that elbow up on the spike?") may work for some, do *not* work for me, and have *no* place in the classroom.

Although I couldn't look my coach in the eye if I were to imply that basic skills are not important, I find that the greatest value of this coaching analogy is its emphasis on the affective domain. The unique opportunity for modeling and nurturing individual and team character that occurs in a coach-player relationship is a rich resource for teachers.

A good coach loves the game. Analagously, a good teacher not only loves to teach, she also loves to learn. It is not enough to model skills correctly and demand repetitions. A good coach plays the game with gusto!

A good coach has great respect for her team. Similarly a master teacher respects the motivating force of self-esteem. She is sensitive to the feelings of players, knowing that skills will come with practice, but players won't come to practice unless they feel accepted by the team and good about themselves. A good coach regards unforced errors objectively—as inevitable lapses in concentration that both the individual and the team must continually aim to reduce.

A good coach acknowledges and carefully preserves the power of teamwork, just as a good teacher realizes that cooperative group work validates both the group and the individual. All plays are recognized as team efforts. A good coach encourages constant communication among players who are expected to encourage and guide each other during the game.

Finally, a good coach and her team share a common goal. The ultimate goal is not winning, but playing the best game possible—*and improving*. This clarity of purpose sustains the team through tough opposition and defeats. What is the classroom counterpart to this powerful shared vision? Are teachers and students working as a team? Let's continue the discussion on the School Renewal Network!

EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS

Project CARE, El Paso TX
Initiated with support from NFIE's Operation Rescue and now supported by the Ysleta School District, Project CARE provides students at six predominantly Hispanic elementary schools with adult mentors who help improve self-esteem and keep them in school. Gloria Barragan, the teacher who conceived and nurtured the program, now works with school counselors who have been assigned primary responsibility for recruiting, training and scheduling mentors. In addition, she has assumed the leadership for two complementary programs aimed at school success and drop- out prevention: a home liaison program, and an after-school tutorial located in the housing projects. For additional information, contact Gloria Barragan, (915) 595-5500.

Education in Harmony, Stanton KY
Located in rural eastern Kentucky, this school of about 400 students builds its entire curriculum around the fine arts, with an emphasis on Applachian culture. Every child learns to play the guitar and the dulcimer. Literature studies emphasize the oral heritage. Drama and dance are integrated with classroom studies and culminate in large productions that attract a regional audience.

Staff prides itself on being at the cutting edge of innovation. Their current staff development focus is on performance assessment. Funding from the Kentucky Education Reform Act has lessened the need for fund-raisers and increased energy for innovation. Contact: Faye King, Principal, 606-663-4334.

News and events from projects affiliated with the NEA National Center for Innovation

MIL CONSORTIUM
Comprehensive School Renewal

Austin TX
IMAGE (International Multicultural and Global Education) begins this fall in the three MIL pilot schools: Travis Heights Elementary, Fullmore Middle, and Travis High School. The theme of discovery and exploration links cross-disciplinary and multi-age K-12 teams.

IMAGE got a boost this summer with training in assessment, whole language, and peer coaching, funded by Region 16 Service Unit. In July, teams met to hammer out interdisciplinary units, evaluation rubrics, and grading philosophy, using funds from the $50,000 that the district allotted to the IMAGE project.

Longfellow Elementary, Riverside CA
School started with news that Longfellow is the recipient of a $400,000 Healthy Start grant from the state of California to fund a first-of-its-kind program. SMART (Service Management through Action, Responsibility and Teamwork) is a pilot within the city of Riverside to centralize social services at the school site. Longfellow Elementary is located in the district's most densely populated area in a neighborhood of high crime, drug, and gang activity. School, District, and City officials started planning SMART almost a year ago, long before anyone knew of the state funding. As a result of their proactive work, families and students will have access to all social services at the school site.

LEARNING LABS
Districtwide Support For Innovation

Chaska, MN
All seven schools now have site-based structures and memoranda of understanding with the District. Each site developed their plans around a set of questions and principles developed by the Board of Education in collaboration with the Vertical team. Staff development has already been largely decentalized in anticipation of the shift to school-centered and teacher-centered change. David St. Germain, Learning Lab and Staff Development Coordinator, observes that with the state and district OBE emphasis, the pieces are in place for systemic change.

Dickinson, ND
In spite of a prolonged impasse in bargaining, innovative work continues, much of it sparked by building-level teams attending conferences and visiting other schools. Their mission: bring back observations and recommendations for consideration by colleagues within their buildings.

Two sixth-grade teachers, Kayleen Wardner and Pat Riddle, were inspired by what they learned at an NEA Center-sponsored session on TQM. Upon their return, they convinced their colleagues on the 4-6th grade team to spend the summer developing a plan for comprehensive renewal — featuring more authentic learning activities, mentorships, integration of special needs students, parental involvement, and involvement of colleagues from other buildings.

Greensburg/Salem PA
The confluence of three initiatives (Learning Labs, a technology partnership with IBM, and high school renovation totaling $18.5 million) provide a context for innovation. Technology is viewed as a catalyst for restructuring, enabling more interdisciplinary, problem-centered learning and changing the roles of teachers and administrators. A paper-in-progress—"The Power and Promise of Technology"—provides examples of innovations and an inventory of technologies. To request a copy, contact Tom Yarbinetz at 412-832-2903 or David Cullan @GSLAB1 NEA School Renewal Network.

Millard, NE
Four non-student weeks are built into this year's calendar, eliminating the less productive partial weeks that frustrate teachers and ibit cncentration on non-instructional activities. The first full week was for back-to-school speeches, workshops, planning and preparation. In October, the non- instructional week will include parent/teacher conferences, site council planning, and optional staff development. In February and again in April, there will be time for parent/teacher conferences, site council planning, and curriculum writing.

Nashoba MA
Over the summer, the Academic Support Center was doubled in size. The Center is staffed by a Director, three aides who recruit, train, and support tutors as well as provide resource assistance to students. This fall, the Learning Lab Steering Committee will focus on vision-building and engaging the faculty in dialogue to integrate the concept of academic support. One goal is to eliminate closed study halls in order to get students out of the isolated, remedial atmosphere and into the more interactive, positive environment of the Academic Support Center.

Paulding County GA
The Learning Lab team is planning to replicate the Rapporteur process on the local level. Using materials from the NEA Center, ideas gleaned from NEA Center-sponsored meeting of staff developers and program evaluators, and first-hand experience with the Rapporteur process, they have developed a "report card" and will be inviting teams of community members to use in observe.

Westerly, RI
The newly restructured and expanded Learning Lab Steering committee now has 20 members, including community members for the first time. Thirteen of the positions are role-related: one representative each from the School Committee, Staff Development, Central Administration, Learning Lab Evaluation Coordinator, a Computer coordinator, Classified Staff, PTO Council, Community Member, Building Administrators, and a Teacher at Large, plus 2 the Learning Lab Coordinators.

The seven non-role related positions are open to all members of the community. The positions were advertised with an explanation of the NEA Learning Lab, and an outline of the commitment necessary for service on the Committee. Interested citizens applied to the Learning Lab Coordinators. Selection was made by the 13 role-related committee members.

A transitional meeting was held celebrate accomplishments to date and to officially initiate the new group. Included were old and new Committee members plus everyone who has ever attended a Learning Lab-sponsored meeting/conference.

TEACHER ED INITIATIVE

Redesigning the Preparation and Induction of Teachers

After accepting the disappointment of failing to attract outside funding, Initiative partners decided to concentrate on developing local resources:

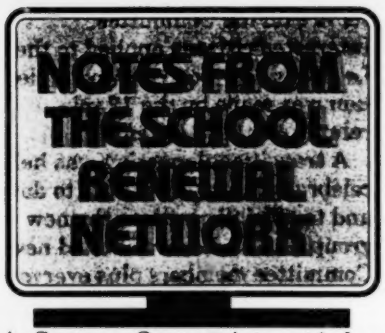
Peabody College is working with selected metro Nashville area schools, developing them as learning organizations. A team of 5- 6 Peabody staffers will serve as a support team for the effort.

Memphis State is proceeding with local funds and their Campus School to establish six professional development schools, mostly in Memphis City School system.

The University of Tennessee Knoxville is using the mentor program to redesign teacher education.

TEA will continue to facilitate communication among the partners and to develop relationships with possible funders. The aim is to use existing resources more creatively and not become distracted by the lack of external funding. The working assumption is that with a positive attitude and a bit of creativity, initiative partners may still attract additional external support.

Reported by Gary Obermeyer, Learning Options, P.O. Box 86362, Portland, OR 97286, 503-771-7963, FAX 771-0123.



As Suzanna Opper points out in her book, *Technology For Teams* (Van Nostrand Rienhold, 1992), groupware (PSInet is an example) is best used as a tool to increase collaboration. But she insists that maximally effective use of groupware demands substantive organizational change (p.8).

The NEA School Renewal Network demonstrates Opper's point. As the context of reflective practice develops, so too does the power and utility of the Network. Dialogue about the use of time provides a good example.

The topic of time has been very much a part of the on-line dialogue since the beginning of the NEA School Renewal Network. An example: Mike Pittard, Clinton Elementary (01/27/90) asked:

"I have a request from a board member in our school district concerning the relationship of learning and the time of day....Is there research-based evidence that shows that there is a best time of day for learning?"

To which Becky Burns, AEL responded (01/29/90):

"In the Learning Styles Network NEWSLETTER, Vol.5, No.2, Spring 1984, an article showed that students whose time preferences were congruent with their class schedules achieved significantly higher scores in reading and math than those whose preferences were not."

More recently, Robert Auchenpaugh, after reading that U.S. students spend fewer days but more hours per year in school due to longer days, asked (02/28/92):

"Just how productive are the last 2-3 hours of the school day? I know that I have a harder time getting the same effort out of kids at the end of the day. Maybe an answer is to shorten the school day and lengthen the year."

Robert's comment reflects a shift from a time-on-task focus to a focus on quality of time — and time for teachers to focus on how best to create an effective learning environment.

Margi @Ahuimanu (04/25/91) writes:

"I agree with Gene Maeroff's statement, 'reform cannot be carried out during teachers' spare time.' If it is to be effective, the job description of the teacher has to change."

Doug Fleming, Network Synergist, notes the importance of the distinction between time constraints that require policy changes and those we can change ourselves. Kris Asthalter @ AUSTIN-KRIS, provides an example of the latter, reflecting on her 'creative writing' class (03/01/92):

"What I remember vividly and with pleasure is the transformation that occurred each time I entered that room. There were no grades. We were given credit for possessing a love of language and the time and freedom to create....In concentrating on one thing we forgot about all the others. Stimulation came from focusing our energies and thus actualizing previously unknown abilities."

Kris' reflections aptly describe the NEA School Renewal Network. For those who make the Network an integral part of their professional lives, it is a place to be transformed and to break the timelock to which Shari Castle and Gary Watts refer in their lead article.

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